MINISTRY OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND EUROPEAN FUNDS

Examination of the evaluation culture

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12th INTERNATIONAL EVALUATION CONFERENCE
WROCŁAW, 21-22 JUNE 2017

The idea of the project derived from need to adapt the concept of evaluation culture to the Structural Instruments system and to develop a mechanism in order to assess the degree of its development.

The overall objective of the project was to contribute to the improvement of the quality, efficiency and consistency of KAI 1.2 “Evaluation” of Operational Programme Technical Assistance 2007-2013 through the provision of a monitoring mechanism which can assess the level of achievement of the key area of intervention, namely the development of a common evaluation culture within the Structural Instruments management system, both in quantitative and qualitative terms.

The **specific objective** of the project was to support the Central Evaluation Unit (ECU) and the MA of the OPTA in the:

1. development of the evaluation culture concept adapted to the peculiarities of EU funds and of the EU Cohesion Policy in Romania
2. development of a methodology for regular monitoring of the development of evaluation culture and establishment of the research panel
3. annual quantification of the progress regarding the evaluation culture
4. impact assessment of KAI 1.2 of OPTA and reporting on any issue related to its design or implementation

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PERFORMED ACTIVITIES		PROJECT OBJECTIVES
1. Inception	1.1 Organization of the kick-off meeting	1. Development of the evaluation concept adapted to the peculiarities of EU funds and of the EU Cohesion Policy in Romania
	1.2 Develop the evaluation culture concept	
	1.3 Examination of the theory underlying KAI 1.2 of OPTA "Evaluation	
	1.4 Inception report	2. Development of a methodology for regular monitoring of the development of evaluation culture and establishment of the research panel
2. Measurement	2.1 Develop and test the monitoring tools for annual measurement of the evaluation culture	
	2.2 Annual measurement set up for the evaluation culture	3. Annual quantification of the progress regarding the evaluation culture
3. Reporting	3.1 Preparation of the Reports (draft)	
	3.2 Communication of results to wide stakeholders community	4. Impact assessment of KAI 1.2 of OPTA and reporting on any issue related to its design or implementation
	3.3 Finalization of the Reports	

General Objective:

Provision of a monitoring mechanism which can assess the development of a common evaluation culture within the Structural Instruments management system

Main results achieved

- An **Evaluation Culture Measurement Index (ECI)** has been developed to define the concept of evaluation culture adapted to EU Funds in Romania, capturing a distinction between evaluation culture (beliefs and values) and capacity (operational aspects).
- **The measurement methodology have been used for three consecutive years** in order to assess and monitor the progress in the level of diffusion of Evaluation Culture (2012, 2013, 2014).

With a view to the **index for measuring the diffusion of evaluation culture and capacity** in the context of Structural Instruments in Romania, it comprised:

- **4 Dimensions**
  - Based on EU benchmarking framework for evaluation capacity: Demand side, Supply side, Dissemination and utilization of evaluation results, Institutionalization of Evaluation Culture
- **16 Criteria**
  - Starting from the EU benchmarking framework and refined by means of the literature review, criteria are aimed at capturing all peculiarities of the development process of the Romanian SIS
  - Criteria have been split in **32 detailed sub-criteria** to better focus on the object of the measurement
- **56 Indicators**
  - Indicators are measurable elements used to assess and quantify the existence and diffusion of evaluation culture

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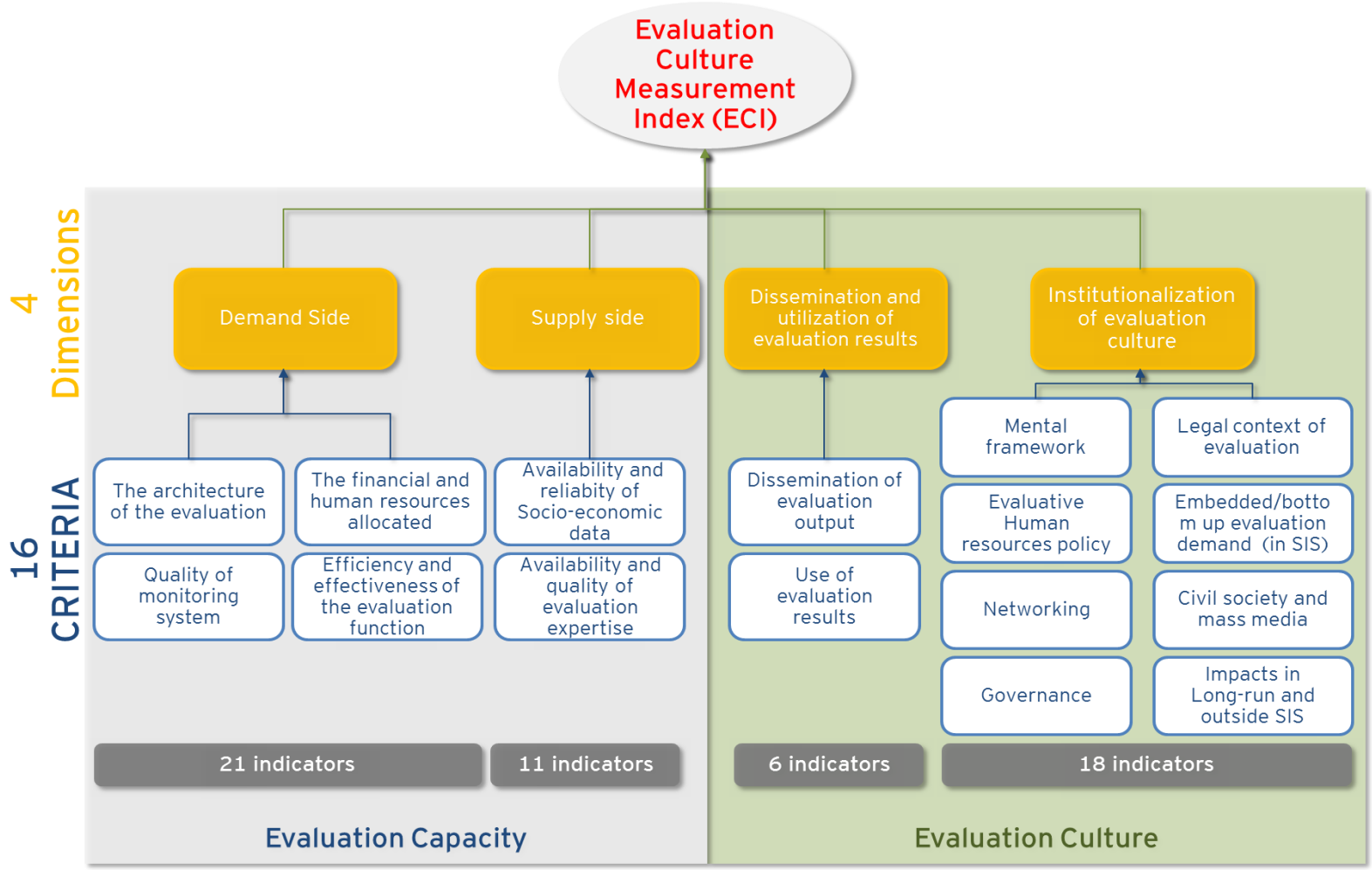

Sources of information	
Primary sources	Survey of wider stakeholders' evaluation community covering demand (e.g. Evaluation Units, MAs, IBs, Policy Makers) and supply side (evaluation societies, independent evaluators, Universities) Focus Group with academic members of ADER in order to assess the supply side of the evaluation market in terms of independence and skills took place during the 2nd and 3rd measurement cycle Focus Group with the EWG aimed at validating the preliminary results and obtaining additional comments and inputs took place the 2nd and 3rd measurement cycle
International benchmarking	Questionnaires from MAs of different EU Member States were used (e.g : France, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Italy): responses covered on average more the 10 OPs per years
Secondary sources	Desk research covering relevant national documents, EU and national methodological guidance, programming and operational documents at OP and NSRF level, evaluation reports.

Key steps of the development process of ECI

- ✓ **Scoring methodology by indicator:**
  - For each indicator a scoring methodology was defined, minimum and maximum score and the corresponding sources of information (i.e. primary sources, secondary sources).
- ✓ **Normalization of indicators:**
  - Since indicators had different measurement units a normalization method was applied to each indicator, normalizing values between [0–1] through Min-Max method.
- ✓ **Weighting:**
  - Each sub criteria was then expressed as average of related indicators and criteria were computed as average of the related sub-criteria.
- ✓ **Computation of the ECI score:**
  - ECI was calculated as average of the 4 dimensions considered. The development of the evaluation culture is **expressed in terms of percentage** at the level of ECI, dimensions, criteria, sub-criteria, **capturing the achieved score in Min – Max range.**
  - The application of the normalization method to the results of the first cycle allowed for a comparison of the development of evaluation culture among cycles.

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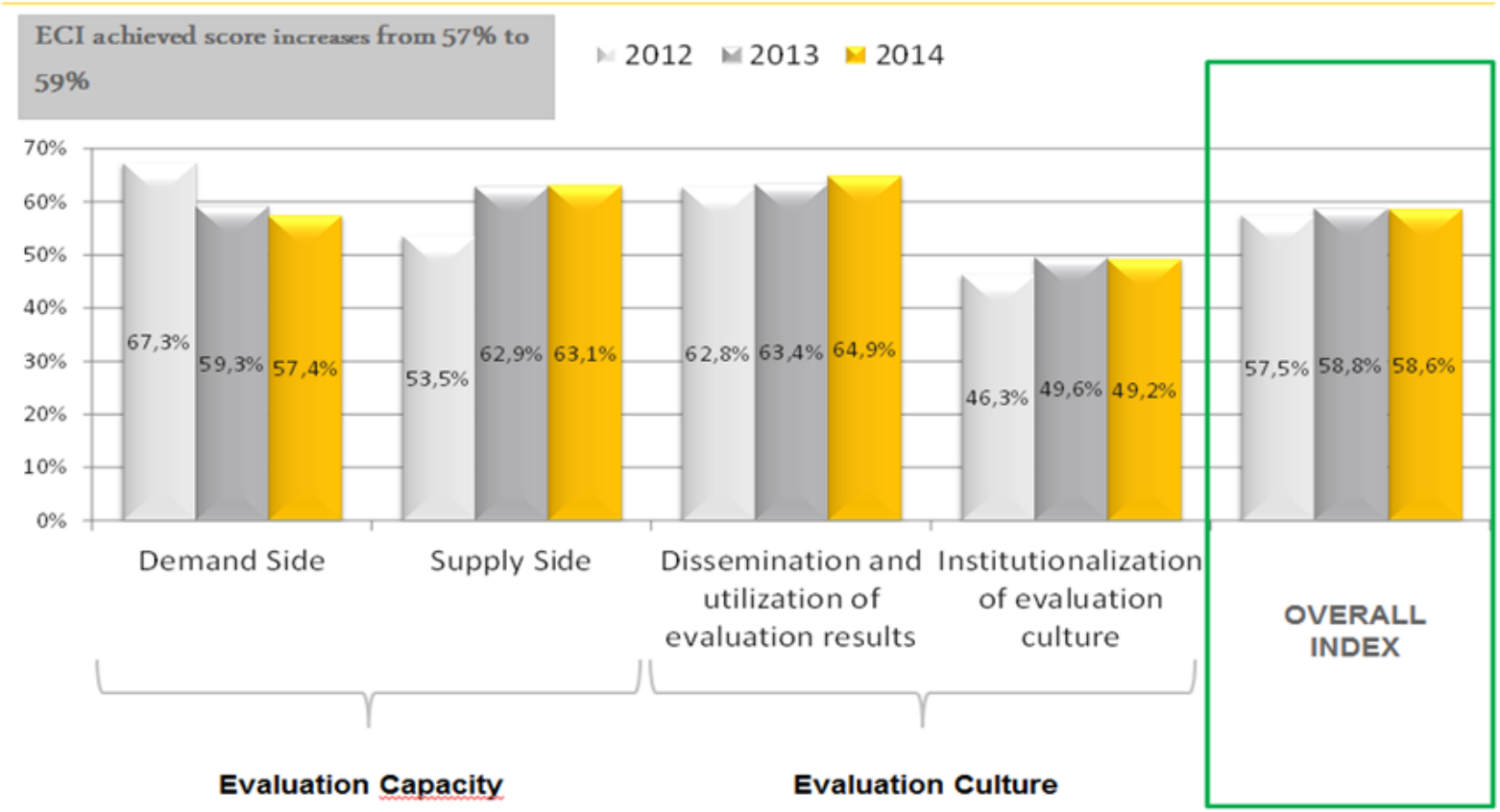
Quantification of the progress regarding the evaluation culture

Overall scoring for the three cycles



Design of KAI 1.2 and assessment of its impact

- The objective of KAI 1.2 "Evaluation" was to ***"Support the development of a common culture of evaluation in the framework of the management system of EU Funds"*.**
- Although KAI 1.2 was designed without having in mind the definition of evaluation culture and capacity as provided by the ECI, for the purpose of providing recommendations concerning its design, there have been assessed:
  - **the coherence between criteria of the ECI and specific objectives** and eligible operations of KAI 1.2, starting from an analysis at the level of indicator.
  - **the coherence between the target groups of KAI 1.2 and the stakeholder groups** indicated in the Research Panel which are part of the ECI methodology, starting from an analysis of the target groups of contracted projects of KAI 1.2.

The objective of the methodology used for measuring the impact of KAI 1.2 on ECI score was to quantify the contribution of activities financed under KAI 1.2 to the overall score achieved by the ECI starting from the correlations between projects financed under KAI 1.2 and indicators of the ECI.

Methodological steps:

- For 54 of the overall 56 indicators, there has been defined a **measurement methodology** aimed at capturing direct or indirect impacts of KAI 1.2, corresponding **sources of information** (mainly desk research and focus group with EWG) and a **scoring methodology:**

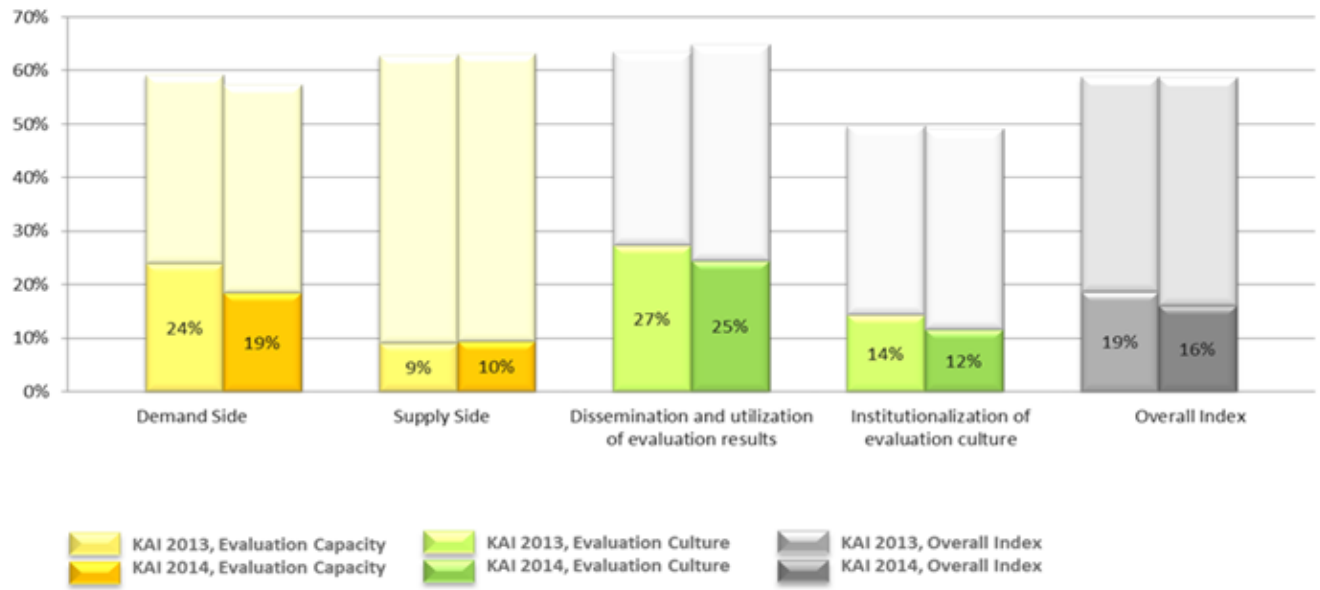
- There were also used other methods such as: desk research, validation interviews, focus groups for collecting, analyzing data and validating the main findings and other complementary data.

Methodology for measuring the impact of KAI 1.2 on ECI score

Sources of information	
Desk research	Analysis of evaluation related materials (e.g. guidelines, training materials, studies, reports, selection criteria for staff) and cross-checking with the deliverables indicated in KAI 1.2 projects
Validation interviews / discussions	Validation of correlations between existing guidelines / procedures related to evaluation and deliverables of the projects”
Focus Group with EWG	Validation with representatives of the EWG that are expected to be among those that benefited the most of the activities performed under KAI 1.2 of he correlations between projects and ECI

The impact of KAI 1.2 by dimension for 2013&2014

KAI 1.2 impact decreases from 32% to 27% of the ECI (19% out of 59%; respectively 16% out of 59%)



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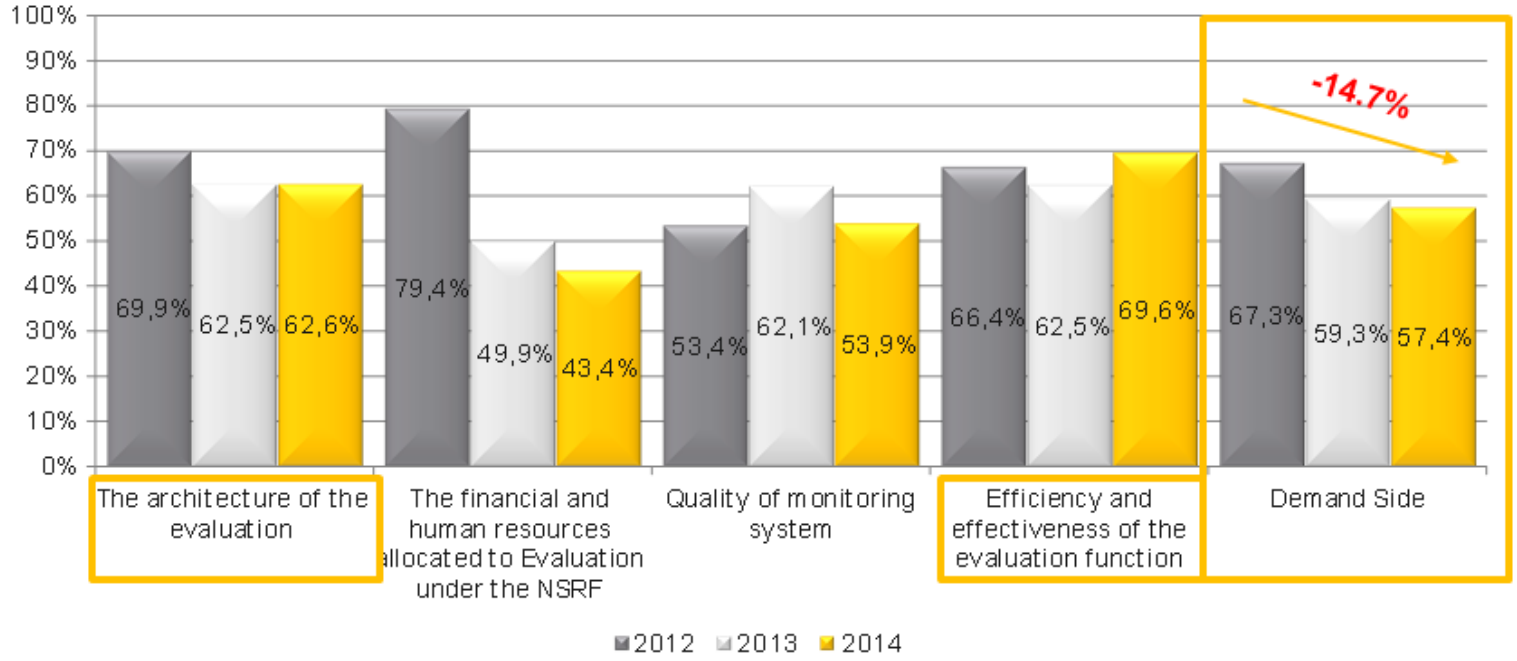
Results by dimension and main criteria

Evaluation capacity – Demand side



(1) The architecture of evaluation

Evaluation Responsibilities: dedicated Evaluation Units (EU) exists in the majority of cases (with the exception of SOP ENV and NPRD).

More than half of the EU are performing also other activities (e.g.: communication, programme coordination, programming) and do not report solely to the head of MA. Mission, roles and tasks of EUs are clearly defined and assigned based on ROF, procedures and job descriptions.

Coordination: the applied procedure concerning the coordinating role of the EWG was not adopted. In the last year of the study, the respondents took part, on average, to 0 - 1 EWG meetings and the approaches shared were often adopted at OP level.

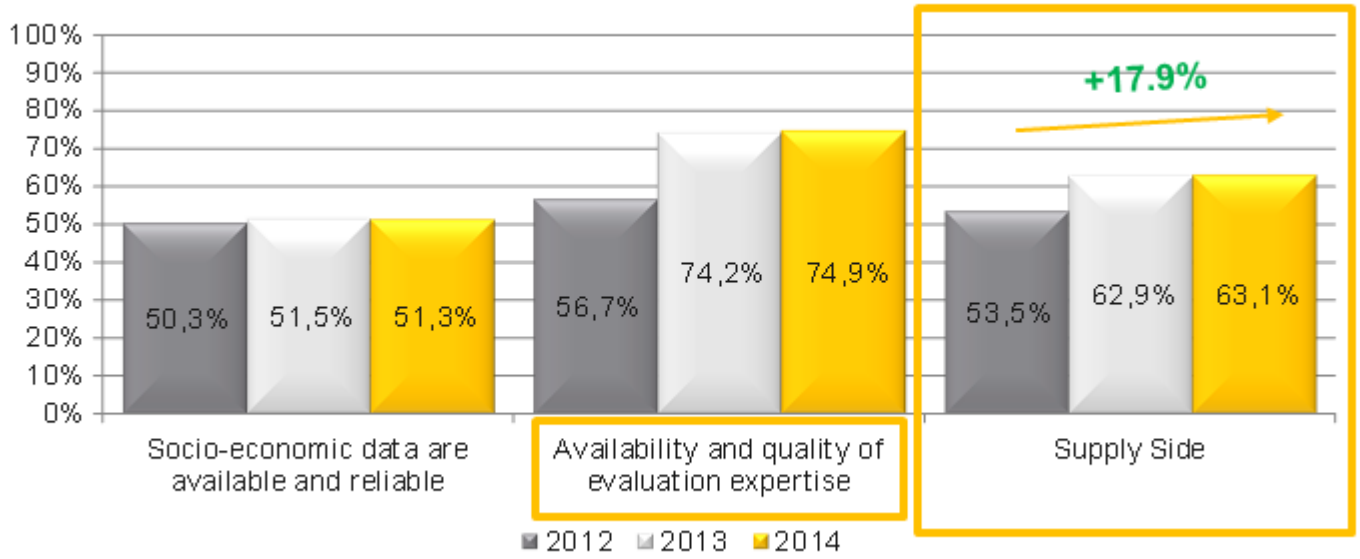
Linkage among evaluation function and other functions: desk research showed that there were procedures in place linking monitoring to evaluation rather than programming. According to survey most respondents considered that cooperation between Evaluation and Monitoring had a proper level and about 51-75% of the evaluations have been initiated in order to investigate issues raised by Programming.

(4) Efficiency and effectiveness of the evaluation function

Evaluation plans: the execution rates of the Multiannual Evaluation Plans (MEPs) was between 30% (OP TA) and 100% (SOP HRD), with an average delay of 6 months between the planned date included in the MEP and the completion date. However, the execution rate was also influenced by the revisal process of the MEP (the latest version was taken into consideration) showing in some cases higher completion rate.

Evaluation Units and Learning process: the increased scores registered for the sub-criteria *Involvement of EUs in the decision making process* and for the *Learning process* was mainly due to the perception of the respondents to the eSurvey.

Evaluation capacity – Supply side



(6) Availability and quality of evaluation expertise

Market Competitiveness: based on the desk research and on the eSurvey, the market was perceived as partially competitive. This was also confirmed during the focus group with ADER;

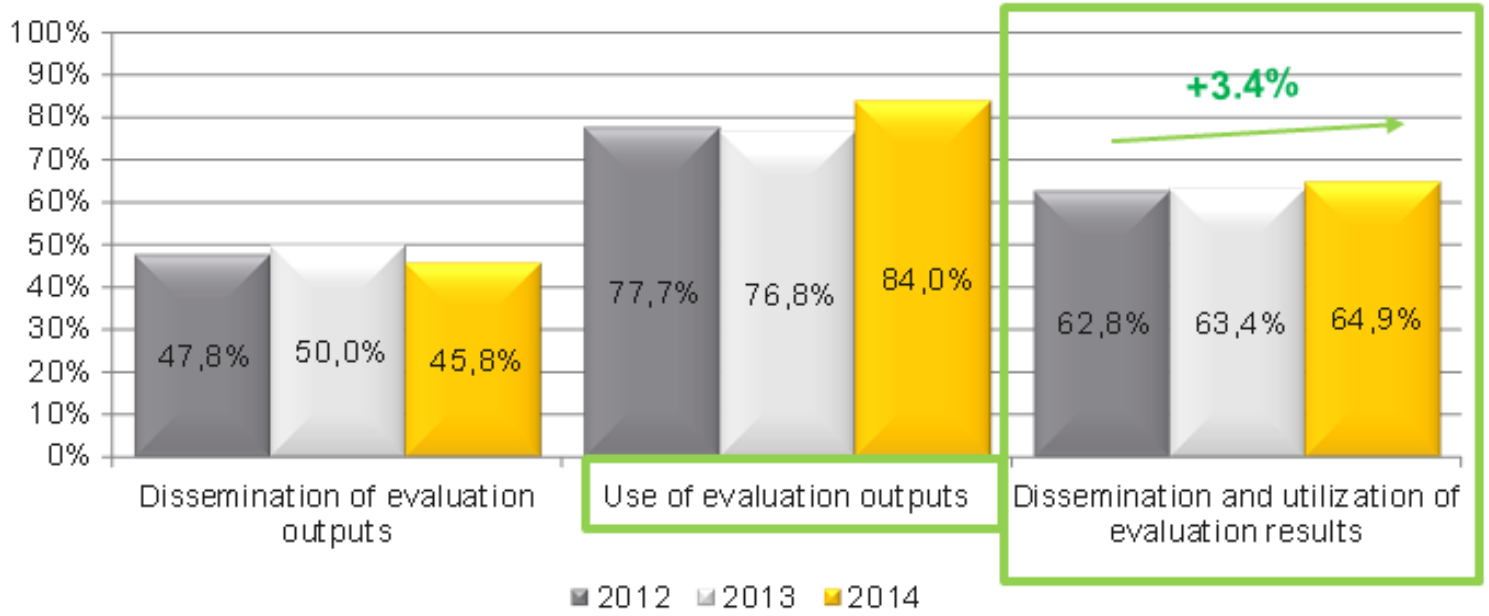
Thematic and methodological expertise: the supply side of evaluation has the thematic and methodological expertise needed, however this can be improved (e.g.: lack of expertise by areas/ topics of evaluations, econometric methods, counter-factual impacts);

Assurance of quality of evaluations: specific check-lists to assess the quality of evaluation reports are in use (except SOP ENV). Based on the assessment of eSurvey respondents, Evaluation reports are of medium to high quality;

Development of evaluation skills: desk research evidenced the existence of master programs dedicated to programme evaluation, which lead to recognized qualification, however these were not considered sufficient by ADER;

Independence of evaluators: based on the eSurvey, evaluators are considered independent.

Evaluation culture - Dissemination and utilization of evaluation results



(8) Use of evaluation outputs

Procedures for addressing evaluation results and follow-up: the score for this sub-criteria suffered changes between measurement cycles due to the inclusion of a new programme in the ECI – NPRD.

Use of evaluation results: a new question was added in the eSurvey, in order to measure the use of evaluation results for the next programming period, which lead to an improved score of the sub-criteria.

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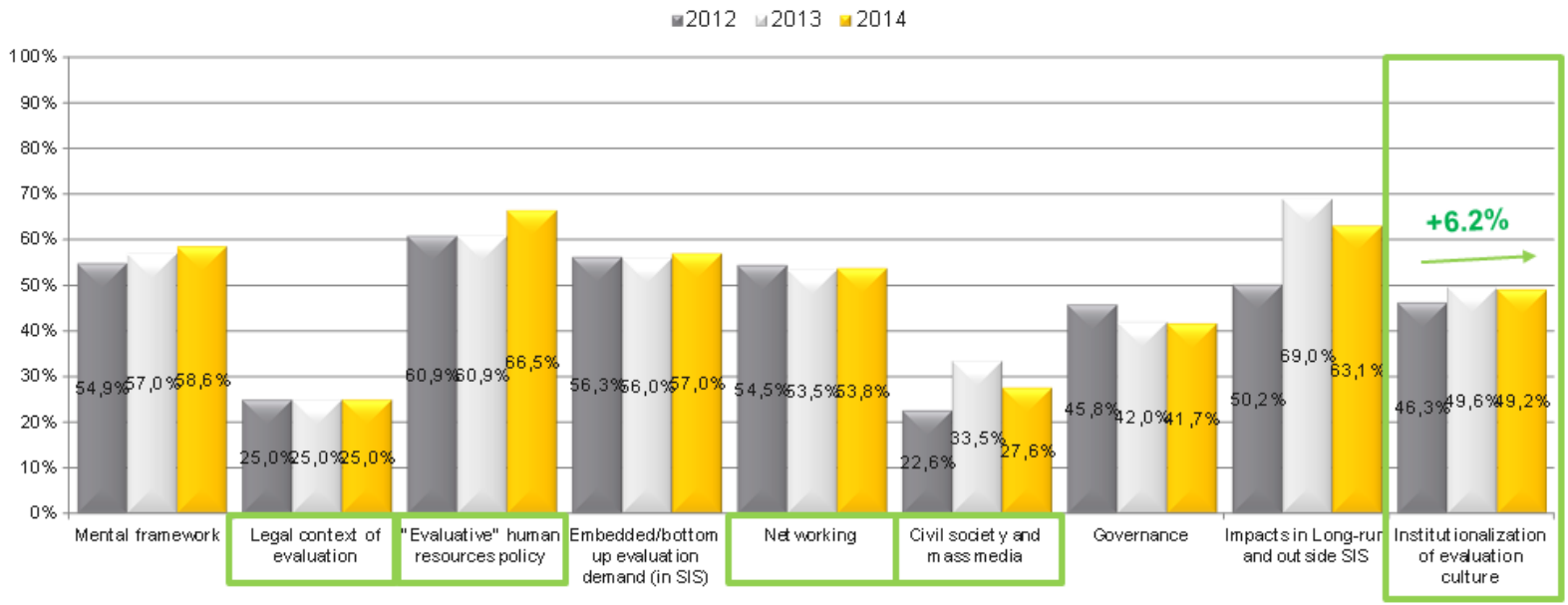
Evaluation culture - Institutionalization of evaluation culture



(10) Legal context of evaluation

There were legal provisions hampering directly or indirectly evaluation:

- Public Procurement – Government Ordinance 34/2006, determining blockages and delays in the acquisition process.
- Ordinance no. 34/2009 based on the agreement with the IMF, World Bank and EU, freezing the hiring of personnel in public administration.
- Programming documents and eligible costs orders, limiting the types of target groups eligible for capacity development actions (e.g. supply side of the evaluation).
- Public finance law 500/2002, limiting the possibilities of involvement of OP Evaluation Unit staff in projects organized by the CEU.

(11) "Evaluative" human resources policy

This criteria was composed of two sub-criteria revealing:

- **National organization of professional evaluators:** there was a medium contribution of the national organization of evaluators to the creation of a network and a low contribution at the dissemination of good practices;
- **Reducing academia-government gap:** there was a mechanism of cooperation between Government an academia which allowed a better policy formulation but its effectiveness is considered at medium level.

(13) Networking

Based on the desk research, we could not identify any KAI 1.2 project supporting the national organization of evaluators. The overall impact of KAI 1.2 on this criterion is 0% of the total achieved score of 54%.

- **National organization of professional evaluators:** no evidence was found of KAI 1.2 projects supporting the activity of the national organization of evaluators.

- **Reducing academia-government gap:** no evidence was found of KAI 1.2 projects supporting the cooperation mechanisms between academia and government.

(14) Civil society and mass media

- **Civil Society participation:** respondents consider a "low" level of participation of civil society in evaluation-related activities; (e.g.: academic environment, vulnerable persons, NGOs, associates / representatives of beneficiaries, professional associations, representative organizations of citizens).
- **Mass Media participation:** the number of public events carried out (per year), other than Monitoring Committees related to evaluation and dissemination of evaluation evidence is low (between 3-5 events).

Main conclusions:

- The results showed a **good level diffusion of evaluation culture** with an average achievement of the ECI of 59% out of the total achievable score of 100%.

- Overall the **evaluation function is efficient and effective and the supply side is endowed with sufficient expertise**. The existing legal framework, lower financial allocations and poorer governance environment compared to other Member States are among factors limiting the further diffusion of evaluation culture.

- **19% of the 59% of the ECI score represents the impact of the Technical Assistance activities** financed under Measure 1.2 "Evaluation" of the OPTA such as the **capacity building** projects aimed at strengthening the evaluation function, the **evaluations carried out at NSRF level** and the support to the **coordinating role of the EWG.**

The full reports are available at:

http://www.evaluare-structurale.ro/en/k-tool/report-search

Thank you!